

# India Now

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This PDF is prepared by Sukhwant Hundal in memory of his father  
Shivdev S. Hundal and mother Harbans Kaur Hundal.

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# INDIA NOW

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## Punjab Crisis: Need of the Hour

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# INDIA NOW

Monthly Publication of IPANA  
Editor : Shekhar Ramakrishnan  
Business and Editorial Office  
India Now  
P.O. Box 37,  
Westmount, Quebec  
Canada H3Z 2T1

## EDITORIAL

### Punjab Crisis: Need of the Hour

KISHAN BAJWA

June 5 marks the first anniversary of the army attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar and the beginning of the army rule in Punjab. The main justification given by Indira Gandhi government for the army action was that terrorist activities in Punjab had increased to a level that only a drastic action such as the attack on the Golden Temple and other religious gurdwaras which had become sanctuaries for the extremists and criminals, could only put an end to the havoc being created in Punjab, as well as save the country from disintegrating.

It is essential to take stock of the situation vis a vis Punjab crisis, a political problem that the government tried to solve through military means. What have been the costs and to what extent has the government been successful in achieving its goals?

According to the official estimates, around 500 people, including army personnel, were killed in the attack on the Golden Temple. It appears rather impossible to delink Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination allegedly by her two Sikh bodyguards and subsequent events from the army action on the Golden Temple. This nation witnessed the worst riots since the partition, directed against the Sikh community mostly in the nation's cosmopolitan capital and other parts of Northern India in November immediately following Gandhi's assassination. According to revised official estimates, over 2600 people were killed, with over 2000 in New Delhi alone, with a loss of property worth a billion rupees in a matter of three or four days.

If one goes by the estimates of independent journalists and civil-rights activists as well as unofficial utterances, the number of people killed in the army attack is above 5000. What kind of democracy do we have that the government does not have to publish the list of the names of those killed in the operation or the list of those arrested even one year after the operation? This also tells a great deal about the preoccupations and priorities of the middle class and the intelligentsia, the most vocal section in our democracy.

The number of those killed in the November riots is also estimated to be above 5000. So, according to official estimates, at least 3000 lives were lost, whereas the number according to unofficial estimates is at least 10000.

Let us examine now to what extent the government has been able to achieve its objectives it set forth in the Operation Bluestar even after such a tremendous cost. What has been the outcome? Can the administrators in Punjab really claim that the terrorism and extremism there have been curbed or been brought under control? Are not there still politicians being murdered? Are not innocent people being killed? Are not the common people scared? Has not the terrorism spilled to the neighbouring states?

Has any progress been made in dealing with and solving the Punjab problem? Is the Akali Dal or the representatives of the Sikh community in a better position to negotiate about their grievances with the Center now than they were for instance last year? Has the threat to nation's unity been dealt with? Is the situation in Punjab better in any sense than it was say last year? One does not need to do any detailed investigation to answer these questions. And it will be difficult to find any one in Punjab who could answer any different from no to these questions. The government policy has clearly failed - miserably.

Punjab is in a mess; it is burning. Every day the situation seems to get worse. It is crying for help. Since its independence, the Indian nation has faced many problems, perhaps far more serious than the one created during the Punjab crises. Many of them have lingered on even until today. Probably no region has been in a situation worse than what Punjab finds itself in today. There does not seem to be any solution in insight. You ask any politician belonging to any party or subscribing to any ideology about a possible way to bring Punjab out of this mess: none of them can honestly claim to have any answer. You get long, winded explanations or recounting of mistakes made by others in the past. But no plausible solution. Or if you talk to the left in Punjab, you either hear that this was nothing unexpected from the gaddi-hungry and corrupts in Congress and Akalis, or there is a need for a protracted struggle to develop an alternative to the existing political parties and make people realize that there is nothing to be gained by following communalists and fanatics. There are also some who blame to some extent imperialism and superpowers.

What about the common people? When I was there last month, the impression I got is that a majority is fed up with what is transpiring and they want a break. At the same time, there is a tremendous distrust and a great divide between the Hindu and Sikh communities.

The middle class in the Hindu community has developed tremendous distrust in Sikhs and they do not seem to show any sympathy for what has happened to the Sikh community in the last year. They are scared and nervous, and identify themselves completely with the center. I cannot claim to have met more than a handful of non-Sikhs in Punjab and Delhi who genuinely felt that what happened to Sikhs during the November riots should not have happened. Even if there is sympathy expressed, there are a lot of ifs, buts and what abouts.



The majority among the Sikhs is genuinely alienated; they point out to the attack on the Golden Temple as well as the Delhi riots, and are rightfully asking about assurances that such ghastly incidents will not recur because of which the whole community is humiliated and suffers because of the actions of a handful on whom they may not be able to exercise any control.

Who are to be blamed for this mess? The central government and Congress(I) party bear the main responsibility; they hold the power and are responsible for handling and dealing with problems. If at any juncture, the government felt that it could not deal with the situation, it should have informed the nation of the reasons and resigned. It is also in a position to defuse the situation and make compromises. At no juncture, the center was being asked to compromise the integrity and unity of the country. However, Congress(I)'s main objective till today has been to create situations and circumstances which can bring maximum electoral gains; towards that end, it could not have done better as was amply demonstrated by the outcome of the last Lok Sabha elections. But it does not care about the costs at which these partisan gains are being achieved. A great deal has been written about the Congress(I)'s role in creating splits within the Akali Dal, promoting Bhindranwale, and backing out at the last minute when the agreement with the Akalis was reached, its role in inciting the riots, in labelling the whole Sikh community as extremists and secessionists, etc., which we will not repeat.

Rajiv Gandhi who promised to give the full and earnest attention of his government to the Punjab problem has himself contributed in inciting anti-Sikh sentiments during his election campaign. He refused to order a judicial inquiry into the anti-Sikh riots and when he finally agreed for one, made it an issue of concern to only the Sikh community. The way and the manner in which Akali leaders were released did not help either.

WHY DOES NOT THE GOVERNMENT STATE ITS POSITION ON THE KEY DEMANDS OF THE AKALI DAL FOR INITIATING NEGOTIATIONS? WHY DOES NOT THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE THAT CHANDIGARH AND OTHER PUNJABI SPEAKING AREAS WILL BE GIVEN TO PUNJAB WITH HARAYANA PAID DUE COMPENSATION AS WAS AGREED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AKALI DAL PRIOR TO OPERATION BLUESTAR? WHY DOES NOT THE CENTER HAND OVER THE RIVER WATER DISPUTE TO A SUPREME COURT TRIBUNAL WHICH CAN SETTLE THE MATTER BASED ON WELL-ACCEPTED NORMS? WHY DOES NOT THE GOVERNMENT RELEASE THOSE AGAINST WHOM THERE ARE NO CHARGES OF VIOLENCE? WHY HAS THE GOVERNMENT NOT RELEASED A LIST OF THOSE KILLED IN THE OPERATION BLUESTAR? THERE IS A NEED FOR A SERIOUS DIALOGUE ON CENTER-STATE RELATIONS WHICH CAN BE INITIATED BY RELEASING THE REPORT OF THE SARKARIA COMMISSION. IN WHAT WAY DO THESE ACTIONS COMPROMISE THE UNITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF INDIA? IF RAJIV GANDHI IS AT ALL SERIOUS ABOUT SEEING THAT PUNJAB BE BROUGHT BACK TO NORMALCY, HE SHOULD UNDERTAKE THESE STEPS IMMEDIATELY.

The Akali leadership and the Sikh religious leadership also cannot escape the blame for the sorry state of affairs. Hardly ever have they shown any statesmanship; it is difficult to single out examples when they have risen above their partisan interests and demands. Their biggest mistake has been to turn their demands which are, by enlarge, the demands of Punjab, into the demands of the Sikh Panth and turn the agitation into a Dharam Yudh.

First of all, it was not the case that representatives of the non-Sikh community did not come forward to support their agitation. Even if that was so, astute political leadership would never engage in activities which would isolate them from practically half of the state's population. Longowals and Tohras may be naive politicians but what about Badals, Barnalas and others, who have shared power in coalition with opposition parties and participated in the opposition enclaves. What purpose did it serve for the Akali Dal to alienate the opposition parties also?

Longowal's recent statements in Delhi evoked hope, but that too was short-lived with the emergence of Baba Joginder Singh who seemed to have undercut Longowal. If Longowal really meant what he said in Delhi, the time has come for Longowal to make a clear departure from the extremists and fanatics within the Sikh community and win confidence of the non-Sikh community by taking unequivocal stand on terrorist activities and reassuring Hindus in Punjab. Longowal has always condemned the terrorist attacks and attributed them to an agency linked to Congress(I) and the government. Hindus in Punjab are genuinely scared—whether because of wrong or right reasons. They look towards the army and the center as their saviour. As long as such an attitude among Hindus persists, it will be difficult to bring normalcy in Punjab. Moderate Sikh leadership can win the trust of Hindus and expose the Congress(I) designs to them.

IN WHAT WAY WOULD LONGOWAL BE HARMING THE CAUSE OF THE SIKH PANTH BY TOTALLY DISASSOCIATING HIMSELF FROM TERRORIST ACTIONS AND UNEQUIVOCALLY DENOUNCING TERRORISTS AND EXTREMISTS TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NON-SIKH COMMUNITIES? IF NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE OPPOSITION IS INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING AN INQUIRY INTO THE EXTREMIST AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN PUNJAB, WHY DOES NOT LONGOWAL HIMSELF APPOINT A CITIZEN'S COMMISSION WITH IMPARTIAL REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE SIKH AND NON-SIKH COMMUNITIES? IT IS IN THE UTMOST INTEREST OF MODERATE SIKH LEADERSHIP TO COME TO THE DEFENSE OF NON-SIKHS AND WIN THEIR TRUST AND CONFIDENCE. IT WILL NOT ONLY CREATE AN AMICABLE ATMOSPHERE IN PUNJAB BUT WILL ALSO HELP SIKHS' STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CENTER.

The non-Sikh community in Punjab also has to share the blame for the sorry state of affairs. First and foremost, they need to realize that if Punjab keeps burning and a satisfactory solution to the problems of the Sikh community is not found, they cannot carry on their daily activities peacefully. They need to stop looking at



the army and the center as their saviour. It is the case that both Sikhs and non-Sikhs are going to continue to live side by side in Punjab, and one community cannot live peacefully while the other is being humiliated emotionally and otherwise or scared. There is a need for a way to revive old bonds that have existed for centuries between the two communities. Towards that end, Hindus must try to understand the plight of Sikhs and what they have gone through in the last year, just like the Hindus would like Sikhs to understand how scared and tense they are. They should not respond to communalist slogans and propaganda just like they do not want Sikhs to pay attention to fanatics and communalists. There is a leadership vacuum among the non-Sikhs in Punjab. BJP which did not have a clear stand vis a vis Akalis prior to the elections, realized that they have lost their support among the Hindus. Instead of adopting a responsible stand, they are becoming more communalists than Congress(1); this is a disastrous path very similar to the schemes of Talwandis in Akali Dal. There is a need to develop a joint platform of Punjabis-- Hindus and Sikhs-- which will consider the interests of Punjab over and above the partisan interests of the two communities.

HINDUS CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN DEVELOPING SUCH A COMMON PUNJABI PLATFORM TO SPEAK FOR PUNJAB'S DEMANDS. FOREMOST, THEY MUST OPENLY EXPRESS PRIDE IN PUNJABI CULTURE AND LANGUAGE, JUST LIKE BENGALIS, BE THEY UPPER OR LOWER CASTE HINDUS OR MUSLIMS, DO NOT HESITATE IN EXPRESSING PRIDE IN BENGALI CULTURE. BUT THE CALL OF THE HOUR TO HINDUS IS TO UNDERSTAND THE AGONY AND SUFFERING OF THE SIKH COMMUNITY AND RENEW THEIR CENTURIES OLD BOND WITH THEM.

It is conceivable that Punjab can be brought back to normalcy if some of these actions are undertaken by the parties concerned in their earnest. Otherwise, there is only darkness ahead.

## **New Anti-Terrorist Bill Passed Emergency from the Backdoors**

KISHAN BAJWA

The parliament dominated by Congress(1) legislated the toughest anti-terrorist law ever seen on this land. The new law empowers the government and the police forces with sweeping powers which were not even enjoyed by the British Colonial government. Any one who writes, paints, or sings questioning the territorial integrity of India can be jailed; he/she can only be tried in camera; the appeal against the decision of the special designated courts can only be made in the Supreme Court and that too within 30 days. Further, the government, police officials, and prosecutors are exempted from prosecution as long as they acted in good faith. Any one indulging in disruptive activities could be imprisoned for a minimum of 3 years but could even be sentenced to life imprisonment. The Bill defines disruptive activity as any action which questioned, disrupted or intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. Most of the powers enjoyed by the government during the internal emergency period of 1975-77 when Indira Gandhi was in power, have been given by this law to the government which it can choose to exercise if it wishes. (See an accompanying article on the details of the Act.)

The Bill was introduced on May 16 in the parliament and would have been passed on the same day without much discussion; however some members belonging to CPI, CPM and Janata demanded more time for the study of the bill and discussion. The Union Law Minister AK Sen said that the country was facing an unprecedented danger by terrorist activities and it would be expedient on the part of the House to take up the Bill and pass it immediately. He went on to add that it would not be good for the country or for any political party to delay the bill. After repeated demands, Sen agreed to the vote on the bill being postponed to Monday, May 20. It was subsequently passed on May 20 after some discussion.

Suprisingly, not much uproar resulted in the parliament or in the press after the government introduced the bill. The chief concern of some of the opposition leaders was that the government would use such law against political movements, trade unionists, and political activists. Law Minister Ashok Sen assured that the act will not be used to curb legitimate dissent. He also discounted suggestions that the law was aimed against the Sikh community.

There were no reports yet of whether civil liberties organizations and activists are filing suits in courts questioning the constitutionality of the act because of its infringement of the fundamental rights.

**FILM**

## **BOMBAY OUR CITY**

**ANAND PATWARDHAN'S BOMBAY : OUR CITY (1985).**  
Colour, 82 mins. **AVAILABLE FROM IPANA (MONTREAL)**

P.O. Box 37,  
Westmount, Quebec  
Canada H3Z 2T1

This quality of being able to draw out the normally voiceless people, to let them vent their anger and articulate their dreams and aspirations is possibly the greatest talent that Anand Patwardhan has as a film-maker. He does not force his views on the audience, he lets them come to their own conclusions. Yet the film is passionate and tender.

From **INDIA NOW / MARCH 1985**



# Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Sikh Problem

## — A Comparative View

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Sikh problem is basically a communal problem. It has many similarities although there are some specificities too. Both problems are the result of our socio-economic structure and the political processes.

It has been the experience of most of the third world countries that the process of economic development and social change generates or strengthens the sense of loyalty to primordial identities. Primordial identities have great mobilizational potential and these identities become a powerful vehicle for the expression of solidarity on racial, linguistic, cultural and religious basis. Such strengthening of primordial loyalties follows both a sudden change of technology (from conventional to modern) and a very slow process of economic transformation and development. The former creates psychological stresses and a sense of insecurity for those who are uprooted due to a sudden change in technology. The resurgence of Islam, apart from other factors, is contributed by a sudden transplant of western technology to the middle-eastern Islamic countries as a consequence of the oil revolution.

Slow economic development also results in developing a primordial loyalty because such a development fails to satisfy the aspirations of all the groups or communities in a pluralist society. Uneven and unjust distribution of the fruits of development among various groups and communities creates a strong sense of injustice and reinforces group militancy. The problem of communalism should be viewed basically in this perspective. One need not, however, belittle the autonomy of racial, religious or linguistic feelings. They appeal directly to human emotions. Religious and similar other institutions also act as a stabilising force in times of acute social distress.

It should be noted that it is always the educated urban elite, aided and abetted by powerful vested interests, which articulates and leads communal movements not only because it has the capacity to articulate but also because of a perception that its interests are being harmed. The educated urban elite, otherwise quite secular, uses religious or similar other parochial sentiments for advancing or protecting its own interests. Sacred is thus used for secular ends. It is this specific combination that gives rise to the phenomenon of communalism in modern times.

### SIMILARITIES

Both Muslims and Sikhs have been in minority in religious as well as in modern political sense. In the case of Sikhs all of them and in the case of Muslims most of them are of native origin; they are converts from amongst Indians. Compared with Muslims, Sikhs are

closer to Hindus both in terms of ethos and rituals. Nevertheless both perceive themselves as aggrieved minorities and equally strongly resist any attempt to subsume their distinctive identities by the majority community.

Before the 1947 partition, Muslims maintained their separate political and religious identity. The Sikhs did not approve of Hindu or Muslim claims to subsume their religious or political identity. Master Tara Singh, the then Akali leader, "attacked the Punjabi Hindus" for trying to include Sikhs in the category of Hindus and he added that Sikhs did not want to be dominated by the Muslims or absorbed by the Hindus (1).

In post-independent India too both communities have been struggling to maintain their separate identities. In the case of Muslims, their personal law has become the symbol of their identity. They strongly resist any attempts to change it or to introduce common civil code. In the case of Sikhs, apart from other things, the Punjabi language has acquired a similar significance. At the same time communal Hindus often insist on introducing common civil code on the Muslims and Punjabi Hindus disowned Punjabi as their mother tongue and declared to be Hindi speaking. The majority community does not entertain the idea of minorities insisting on retaining their separate religious, cultural or linguistic identities.

In fact this has become a vicious circle. The more the two minorities insist on maintaining their separate identities the more the majority apprehends political trouble and insists on wiping out symbols of these separate identities. The minorities feel more threatened by this behaviour of the majority and insist on retaining their symbols of respective identities with ever greater obstinacy. This sense of identity gets further accentuated in the face of socio-economic or political crisis.

At the time of the partition, Muslims were in direct confrontation with the Hindus. Sikhs decided to come politically closer to Hindus. But this closeness of political identity was short lived. Soon after the partition, Sikhs began to feel politically alienated when the Punjabi Hindus disowned Punjabi as their mother tongue and the Nehru government refused to concede the demand for a separate Punjabi suba.

With the acute crisis in Punjab, Sikhs became so conscious of the need of a separate identity that the Akali leader Harchand Singh Longowal began to describe the Sikhs as a separate nation. When there was hue and cry on the use of the word explained by saying that it meant community and not a nation. In the pre-independence period, Muslims had insisted that they were a separate nation and that as far as Muslims and Islam are con-



cerned there is no concept of separation between religion and politics (2). Some of the Sikh leaders too made similar claims.

In a foreword for a book, Master Tara Singh (3) argues: "there is not the least doubt that the Sikh religion can live only as long as the Panth exists as an organised entity." He also maintains: "Unlike the past the modern attack is not on our persons but on our ideology. We are told for example that religion is a private matter for an individual. This single innocent looking sentence has done more harm to Sikhism and the

existence and solidarity the Khalsa, based as it is on Sikhism, has no meaning." (4)

Thus we see that both Muslims and Sikhs consider religion as the very basis of their politics. The two, in their opinion, cannot be separated. While the Muslim League took a clear cut stand on religion and nationhood and carved a separate nation, the Sikhs, on account of the peculiar situation they were faced with, remained rather ambiguous and ultimately threw their lot with the Indian National Congress. However, it was now (i.e. in the early eighties) that the tensions became very acute and the Akalis began asserting separate Sikh identity as aggressively as the Muslim League did in the pre-partition period.

The leadership of the Muslim League before partition and that of the Sikhs in recent years has been provided by the educated urban elite with the support of landed interests. The Muslim league represented the interests of landlords on the one hand, and those of professional middle classes, on the other. It is clear from the memorandum presented to the Viceroy by the Muslim League in 1906, which states: "May it please your excellency, availing ourselves of the permission accorded to us, we the undersigned nobles, jagirdars, taluquaders, lawyers, zamindars, merchants and others representing a large body of the Mohammedan subjects of His Majesty the King Emperor in different parts of India, beg most respectfully to approach Your Excellency with the following address for your favourable consideration." (5)

This character of Muslim League did not change. Its base later widened among the Muslim middle-classes, i.e. among urban educated elite as pointed out earlier. These classes, are hardly concerned with religiosity or theology in a formal sense; yet they championed the cause of religious nationalism in order to protect their own interests. The Sikh urban elite representing the interests of rich Jat peasants as well as urban commercial and industrial interests, have been championing the cause of Sikh nationalism using, like the Muslim League, the religious rather than secular idiom.

This does not mean that the Muslim league did not and the Akali Dal does not touch the bosom of those whose interests they do not represent. The religious appeal has its strength and mobilizatory power. It is employed to create identity of interests across the class lines. The urban elite often succeeds in creating the identity of interests by using cultural or religious idiom. The Congress, before and after independence tried to appease Hindu and Muslim communalism. Instead of solving the genuine grievances of the minority communities it tried to appease the vested interests among them and thus conferred respectability to communalism.

In the case of Muslims, the Congress could not reach a settlement with the Muslim League and ultimately the country was divided. Closet to the solution of the problem was the 1928 Motilal Nehru Report. Jinnah along with some other Muslim leaders including that of the Congress had suggested some modifications in the Nehru Report, which he was inclined to accept. If these modifications were accepted the Muslims were prepared to give up separate electorate. However, some Congress leaders along with leaders of Hindu Mahasabha put their feet down and the negotiations came to a naught. The position hardened on both sides and the relations kept on worsening.

The Pirpur Enquiry Committee appointed by the Muslim League in 1938 pointed out: "Whatever may be the underlying principle of Congress nationalism and whatever may be the justification for the foregoing incidents - the fact remains that the average Hindu is inclined to associate Swaraj with Ramraj and Congress Government with Hindu Government. The Muslims feel that notwithstanding the non-communal professions of the Congress and the desire of a few Congress leaders to follow a truly national policy, a vast majority of the Congress members are Hindus who look forward after many centuries of British and Muslim rule to the establishment of a purely Hindu raj." (6)

This was a fairly balanced assessment of the character of the Congress and the mentality of a number of lower-rank Congress functionaries. Had the Congress shown more equanimity and adopted a balanced approach, perhaps the partition of the country could have been averted. The Sikh problem has run into a similar pitfall. The Sikh grievances which are both of socio-economic and political nature have not been given the serious consideration they deserve. The prolonged and fruitless negotiations only produced frustration rather than a solution and fanned extremism among them. The Congress, it would be seen, once again tried to achieve its short term political goals and put the security and integrity of the country into near peril. The Hindus in and out side the Congress had, by and large, anti-Sikh sentiments and the Congress government led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi wanted to take full political advantage of these Hindu sentiments. The RSS, a Hindu communal body, fully supported Mrs. Gandhi on her Punjab policy. Most of the Hindus in the North were jubilant when the army marched into the Golden Temple. The Hindu reaction to this could be gauged from the letters which appeared in major Indian papers. One Bombay journalist went to the extent of suggesting that the minorities in India including the Sikhs be disenfranchised for ten years and their behaviour be kept under observation (7).

This is not to condone Sikh extremism or the demand by a small section of Sikhs mainly those living abroad for Khalistan. All I am saying is that the Sikh extremism is a function of certain political context as the League politics was in the late thirties and forties. The responsibility of extremism cannot always be foisted on one party to the dispute. Today the attempt is to project the Sikhs as the main culprit which is certainly not fair and such an approach would not bring us nearer to the solution. The country was once made to go through the trauma of vivisection. We cannot afford another similar disaster.



So far we have discussed certain similarities between the Hindu-Sikh and Hindu-Muslim problem. In order to understand the problem of communalism in India, it is also necessary to deal with specificities of the problem both in terms of socio-economic issues and mental attitudes.

Compared with the Muslims, the Sikhs are much more assimilated with the Hindu culture both in the urban and the rural areas. Muslims in the urban areas in North India, which is the heartland of communalism, are less assimilated. This is an important factor. It has often been argued that if Muslims adopt the Hindu culture and its ethos and consider Hindu deities as their heroes, the edge of communalism will be blunted. According to this argument, the real cause of communalism is the lack of assimilation. However, the problem of Hindu-Sikh conflict explodes this myth of cultural assimilation. The Sikhs, as pointed out, are a highly assimilated lot; they not only have Hindu names but also accept Hindu deities.

Mr. Ram Swarup says: "Hindus were Sikhs and Sikhs were Hindus."

A Sikh was a Hindu in a particular role. When under the changed circumstances he could not play that role, he reverted to his original status. The government of the day admitted that 'modern Sikhism was little more than a political association, formed exclusively from among Hindus, which men would join or quit according to the circumstances of the day.' (8) (emphasis added.)

Ram Swarup further argues that it was British machination which brought about separation between the Sikhs and Hindus. Whatever the merit of this argument the fact remains that the Sikhs began to assert their separate identity only lately. This began with the formation of Singh Sabha in the 19th century. The first Singh Sabha was formed in Amritsar in 1873 to restore Sikhism to pristine purity and to bring back into the Sikh fold the apostates, apart from other objectives (9). Its culmination was the demand by the Akali leaders that the Indian Constitution be amended and that Sikhs no longer be bracketed with the Hindus.

Does this not show that cultural assimilation is not sufficient to establish stable and harmonious inter-communal relationship? It is not religio-cultural factors

in certain respects) which generates communal conflict; its genesis owes much more to socio-economic factors. Had it not been so, very cordial relations ought to have existed between the Sikhs and Hindus.

It is, therefore, not a sound argument that the Hindu-Muslim conflict could be blunted only if Muslims opted for religio-cultural assimilation with the Hindus. Such a demand is not only undemocratic and noneffective in solving the communal problem but can also lead to dangerous consequences. Religio-cultural pluralism is not the weakness but the strength of a society. The real test of secularism and democracy lies in allowing the religio-cultural pluralism to flourish.

Another specificity of Sikh problem is the socio-economic condition of Sikhs in the present day India. The Muslims are poor and backward whereas the Sikhs are much more dynamic and economically prosperous.

Muslims feel aggrieved as they do not get the adequate share in the economic progress whereas the Sikhs complain that their aspirations for further progress and prosperity are being thwarted by the Central government and hence their demand for greater autonomy for Punjab. The controversial Anandpur Sahib solution, in the main, represents the aspirations of the upper classes of Sikhs precisely in this sense. Their economic ambition can be realised only if they enjoy much greater autonomy in state affairs.

The socio-economic issues are of such vital importance that even after the army action, the Sikh leadership has not, and perhaps will not, give up their demand for the implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Thus on December 30, 1984, the senior most Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee acting president and a senior Akali leader, Mr. Prem Singh Lalpura, said that there can be no solution to the Punjab problem until the Anandpur Sahib resolution is accepted by the government (10).

The economic progress has its own dynamics and if it is thwarted at any stage by a government or any other agency, it creates resentment as strong as when one is completely deprived of any economic progress. The Muslims fall in the latter category. They incessantly feel deprived of due share in the economic progress, and justly so. The Sikhs have "arrived", to use a currently popular terminology but are being deprived from "taking off" economically whereas the Muslims are yet to "arrive" economically.

The Sikh fundamentalism, it must be noted, like that of the Israelis, has come to be a powerful instrument of the kulaks and the rich. In the case of Muslims, it tends to be an instrument in the hands of feudal elements who exploit it to perpetuate the current fundamentalism is at the service of feudal and similar other vested interests including those of the military. It is for this reason that religious rituals, rather than its values play such an important role in official declarations.

Due to the success of the green revolution the Jat Sikh peasantry has been able to generate good deal of surplus which it wants to invest in more profitable industries. However, the Central Government policy does not encourage setting up of big industries in Punjab. This

**SPECIAL  
REPORT**

## **WHO ARE THE GUILTY?**

Report of a joint inquiry by People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) into the causes and impact of the Delhi riots

**AVAILABLE FROM IPANA (MONTREAL)**



creates frustration among the rich peasantry. The Akalis, it is well known, derive their main support from the Jat kulaks. There is, therefore, great deal of pressure on the Akali leadership to demand autonomy for Punjab.

There is another phenomenon. Maximum arable land in Punjab has already been brought under cultivation. Crop rotation has also been resorted to. Thus there is hardly any scope for further expansion of agricultural operations. It also creates frustration and sends a large number of youth to urban areas in search of employment.

The youth, however, remains unemployed and takes to extremism in politics. They get attracted to the slogan of Khalistan, which they think, would solve all the economic problems. The Muslim youth earlier succumbed to similar slogans for Pakistan thinking that it would be an economic paradise for them. Pakistan did fulfill the dream of a section of Muslim mercantile bourgeoisie and provided high status government jobs to the educated muslim youth, especially from U.P. and Punjab. Similar aspirations are driving many Sikhs to support the demand for Khalistan.

In contemporary India (i.e. post-partition period) the Muslims have no such ambition. Their elite realised these ambitions in the shape of Pakistan in 1947. The Muslim communalism has therefore lost all its aggressiveness and remains defensive even in its most aggressive form. The Sikh fundamentalism in Punjab tends to be quite aggressive in action and hyperbolic in tone although the situation has somewhat changed since the army action. The Sikh youth in Punjab are much more militant than the Muslim youth in any part of India including Kashmir although the Muslims are a much bigger minority than the Sikhs. Again the reasons are not far to seek. The Sikhs have the ambition to rise while the Muslims are struggling to keep themselves afloat. There is no bourgeois class among the Muslims nor do they have a powerful intellectual middle-class elite. They are educationally backward and have much less than proportionate representation both in government as well as in private sector.

With the Punjab problem communalism has acquired yet another dimension which the social scientists have to understand and analyse. We have tried to throw some light on the similarities and specificities of this newly developed dimension. Needless to say, much more needs to be explored in this respect.

Notes.

1. Stephen Oren "The Sikhs, Congress and the Unionists in British Punjab, 1937-1945," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.8, Part 3, p.413.

2. Jamat-e-Islami-i-Hind still maintains that religion and politics but no longer claims its goal as the establishment of Islamic Theocracy or theo-democracy to use a term from its chief ideologue Maulana Maududits but talks of loamat-e-Din, i.e. consolidating religion.

3. Quoted by M.S. Dhama: from *Minority Politics in Punjab*, Princeton University Press, 1966, pp.69.

4. Quoted by M.S. Dhama Book, vol. 1, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1980 pp. 161-52. pp. 161-162.

5. See, Muslim Memorandum to Viceroy, 1906, reproduced from *Muslim India*, March 1983, pp. 129.

6. Report of the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Council of All India Muslim League to enquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces, 15 November 1938, (Pirpur Report) Delhi 1938, p.7 Cf. Uma Kaura pp.124.

7. See the letter by Ashok Row Kavi in *Indian Express*.

8. See Times of India dated December 19, 1984 "Concept of a Sikh Nation"-I

9. Harbans Singh "Sikhism: Challenge and response (1849-1873)". *Studies in Sikhism and Comparative religion* vol. II, No. 1 (April 1983) pp. 96-97, Cf. M.S. Dhama pp 175.

10. Times of India December 31, 1984 pp.9.

[Slightly abridged, ed. India Now]



Outside her wrecked home

—Hindustan Times

## Bordering on the Truth How the Media Distorts Punjab

Following is an article that appeared in Imprint of June 1984 PRIOR to the army action in Punjab. It discusses how the media was distorting the events in Punjab and how the Sikh community as a whole was being blamed for the actions of a handful. How the government, TV and radio as well as the press painted Punjab's picture has been pointed out by many including Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh in their book, the *Tragedy of Punjab*. We think that these distortions played a key role in the rise of anti-Sikh sentiments among the non-Sikhs in Northern India which with the instigation of some Congress(I) leaders, resulted in the worst riots against the Sikh community in New Delhi, Kanpur, Bokaro and other parts. Sadly enough, such distortions are still continuing in the national press, especially in the Hindi and Urdu newspapers of Punjab, and hardening attitudes of non-Sikhs against Sikhs. — Ed.]



Arun Chacko

Today, the Sikhs of this country are, in the national doghouse. For a lot of people, virtually every Sikh has become at best an anti-Hindu, potential secessionist who can no longer be trusted, and at worst a gun-toting extremist and traitor. If anyone is responsible for this impression, it is the so-called national press.

It is no one's case that Sikh extremist acts are justified. Nothing but the severest action is required. Why it hasn't been taken for two years is no fault of the common Sikhs, but of the government playing its perverse politics.

Not every Sikh is politically inclined or an Akali, much less an extremist. The vast majority are honourable and loyal citizens of this country, equally horrified by the violence and turn of events in Punjab.

Many of them see the extremists as a bunch of criminals, first set up and encouraged by then Home Minister Zail Singh and Sanjay Gandhi to devastate the moderate Akali Party, which they have certainly succeeded in doing. The benign attitude of the government has merely reinforced their suspicion. What particularly infuriates them is the defiling of their gurdwaras by the presence of, and gun battles involving, various armed political factions.

If, in this rather depressing scenario, many Sikhs see a villain, apart from the extremists, it is the Congress Party. And it is difficult to fault their reasoning. The rivalries within the Punjab Congress (I) have probably contributed more to the present crisis than anything else.

The ruling party undoubtedly contrived a crisis for its own narrow personal and political ends. The only trouble is the Frankenstein it created has wound up threatening the unity of the country.

However, what is quite ridiculous is the daily reportage which paints every anti-social action perpetrated by any Sikh anywhere, as part of the extremist movement.

Punjab was a very violent state at the best of times. With over half the population Sikh, they were always responsible for a lot of crime. They were looting banks, murdering and causing general mayhem even before Mr. Bhindranwale was born. If some Sikh anti-social elements now find extremism a convenient garb to continue their activities, who really is to blame?

Everyone knows Punjab is a sensitive border state. While Pakistan could hardly have created this problem, they are certainly in a position to take advantage of it. It's no good being sanctimonious, because India probably took advantage of similar opportunities in Sind, for instance, not to forget East Pakistan.

However, all this seems to be forgotten in what seems to be, at times, a systematic attempt to denigrate a whole community. After all, the Akalis were ready to agree to government-sponsored proposals thrice before Mrs. Gandhi mysteriously backed out at the last moment. That was clearly mala fide, but rarely does the national press present the problem that way.

from Imprint, June, 1984

## Why are Extremists being Killed in Police Custody?

KISHAN BAJWA

There is a disturbing trend in the way those labelled by the police as extremist gang leaders are dying in police custody. Soon after the bomb explosions in Northern India, the police claimed to have captured three Sikhs who according to the police might have master-minded the explosions. One of them, Mahinder Singh Khalsa, was apparently tortured so much by the police that he died within 24 hours after his arrest. Subsequently, another suspect, Mohinder Singh Oberoi allegedly committed suicide in a jail, leaving a four-page confession accepting responsibility for planting the bombs, according to the police sources.

A few days before the bomb explosions, there were reports of a bloody encounter between the police in Chandigarh and the alleged extremists. One of the extremists was captured whereas the other slipped. This extremist, called a gang leader by the police, also died in police custody, allegedly succumbing to the injuries inflicted on him during the torture. The police had earlier reported the death of another extremist while in police custody.

These accounts of the deaths of extremists in custody are the very least puzzling and disturbing. It is the police itself which at first professes to have captured an extremist leader who is likely to provide important information in uncovering extremist plots. It is thus in the best security interests that such persons remain alive even if they have suffered serious injury during the course of the arrest. However, a few days afterwards, they are reported to have died.

One of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's alleged assassins Beant Singh also died in suspicious circumstances; the government till today has not offered any satisfactory explanation. According to the official sources, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh surrendered after having emptied their guns on Gandhi saying "Hamara Kam Ho Gaya Hai" (our job has been completed). They were captured by a special unit of Indo-Tibetan guards, especially trained for hand-to-hand combat. They were taken to a room. A few minutes after, according to the official sources, there was a scuffle resulting from Beant Singh and Satwant Singh trying to snatch guns from the guards and attempting to escape. The guards had to fire resulting in Beant Singh's death and Satwant Singh getting seriously injured.

It will be foolish to imagine that those handling these extremists do not understand the importance of their remaining alive. This makes one wonder: Is there a deep-rooted conspiracy? Are there powerful politicians and administrators who have something to lose if these so-called extremist leaders are alive to provide information about the real culprits?



## Reservation: SC recommends Merit-cum-means Criterion

### R.N. Raju

A five-member constitution bench of the Supreme Court has suggested caste cum means tests as an important guideline in implementing any reservation policy by the various state governments and the central government. The Court was responding to the request of the Karnataka state government made several years ago when the state planned to appoint a Commission for examining the reservation policy in employment and educational fields for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

The five judges of the Constitution Bench gave separate judgements on the case while agreeing on the general guidelines emphasising the inclusion of means as a factor in deciding on the reservations. "A somewhat unusual exercise is being undertaken by the Court in giving expression to its views without reference to specific facts," the Chief Justice Mr. Chandrachud said. In his judgement Chandrachud said that "insofar as other backward classes are concerned, two tests should be conjunctively applied for identifying them for the purposes of reservation. One, that they should be comparable to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the matter of their backwardness. And two, they should satisfy the means test such as a state government might lay down in the context of the prevailing economic conditions."

The reservation policy follows the constitutional provisions under Article 15(4) dealing with reservation in educational institutions and Article 16(4) dealing with public employment. The ruling of the Bench laid down broad guidelines and criteria that would help any state appointed Commission in identifying the socially and educationally backward class of citizens for the purposes of reservation. The Karnataka case arose when the state government accepted the Havanur Commission report and ordered reservation of 64 percent for purposes of admission to educational institutions and 66 percent for

employment in government service. The state government's orders were issued in 1977 and 1979. Although the current ruling of the Supreme Court has no specific bearing on the reservation policies in operation in Karnataka or any other state, it is expected to have an impact on the review and future implementation of the reservations for backward classes.

In his judgement, Chief Justice Chandrachud proposed a periodic review of the reservation policy. This will afford an opportunity to the state to rectify distortions arising out of particular features of the reservation policy. It will allow the people, both backward and non-backward, to ventilate their grievances in a public debate on the practical impact of the policy of reservations. The reservation in favor of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes must continue as at present, that is, without the application of a means test, for a period not exceeding 15 years, Chandrachud said. "Another 15 years will make it 50 years after the advent of the Constitution, a period reasonably long for the upper crust of the oppressed classes to overcome the baneful effects of social oppression, isolation and humiliation," the Chief Justice said. After 15 years, the means test should be applied even to the scheduled castes and tribes. "It is essential that the privileged section of the underprivileged society should not be permitted to monopolize preferential benefits for an indefinite period," Chandrachud added.

The members of the Bench had no agreement on the actual percentage of the reservations in favor of backward classes. Currently, such a percentage is constitutionally laid out only for the scheduled castes and tribes.

Even though the reservation policy has been in existence for a number of years, the actual impact it has had on the scheduled castes and tribes has been very small. The original policy had been modified to include other sections of society under the category of backward classes. However, the designation of backward classes has always been done solely on the basis of castes and subject to the influence of those in political power. As a consequence, those deserving to benefit from the reservation policy have largely been left without any substantial gains. At the same time, the various state governments, most of whom have been under Cong(I) control for the majority of the last 35 years have contributed to the emergence of an anti-reservation force. This has been possible because of the fact that the reservation policy intended in Constitution as a social reform has been used most often as a political tool by the party in power.

The ruling of the Supreme Court is in the same spirit as the recommendations of the Rane Commission in Gujarat. It is becoming more and more apparent that economic means should be considered an important criterion in the actual implementation of the reservation policy as it pertains to educational opportunities as well

INDIA TODAY.

SHEKHAR GUPTA



Stir leaders in Ahmedabad



as employment opportunities. However, the policy should continue to be implemented as sanctioned in the Constitution for the scheduled castes and tribes until a very perceptible change in their status is realized. For other backward classes, the reservation policies existing at present deserve to be immediately reviewed and the purely caste based criteria as at present should be replaced by one that takes into account the social and economic backwardness of these sections of society.

## **Over 150 Killed in Anti-Reservation Riots in Gujarat**

Over 150 people have been killed, thousands injured and property worth hundreds of millions of rupees have been destroyed in the anti-reservations riots that started last February. More people have been killed in rioting in Gujarat in a short period of 3-4 months than killed during the Akali agitation in Punjab during any period of that duration except for the army action on the Golden Temple.

Many a times demonstrations supposedly protesting against higher reservation quota for backward castes turned communal and attacked Muslim localities with the poor being the main victim.

It appears that the Solanki government has deliberately let the situation become explosive instead of defusing it at the initial stages of the protests. The police has not been able to control the situation - sometimes the supposed protectors of law and order going into a frenzy ruthlessly beating and firing on people, and even setting buildings on fire. The building housing the office of the largest Gujarati daily Gujarat Samachar and other newspapers was set on fire by the police apparently because of its reporting of police atrocities.

The anti-reservationists, who initially were primarily students from medical and engineering colleges, were soon joined by the parents associations in their demands and protests. Now, they appear to have the support of a majority of upper and middle classes including lawyers, doctors, teachers, and government employees. About 500,000 government employees have threatened another walkout starting June 7 if their demands are not conceded. Talks between government employees and the authorities as well as between anti-reservation agitation leaders and the government have failed. Anti-reservationists have threatened to expand their agitation to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and other parts of India if their demands are not met.

As the two accompanying articles indicate, the national press as well as the local press have been exposing the police atrocities and the government's dilly-dallying role during the agitation but they have played down the havoc created by the anti-reservationists in Ahmedabad, Baroda and other places especially against the Muslims and Dalits.

There was a report of an innocent looking funeral procession with about 100 mourners and 4 pall bears which was intercepted by a police picket when it became suspicious of the shape of the shrouded body. The mourners were asked to unwrap the body following which the police found that the body comprised of lethal weapons - dharis, bhalas, buchis, etc. All the mourners WERE ARRESTED.

## **Communal Frenzy in Gujarat**

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

Bombay May 20, 1985: The agitation in Gujarat against reservations for the backward castes and classes has been going on since early February. The agitation was started by the students of engineering and medical colleges. However, after the March Assembly elections, political parties got involved indirectly. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) especially played a mischievous role. Ashok Bhatt, an MLA from Khadia area of Ahmedabad city was seen provoking people both against the police as well as against the Muslims. He was arrested in early May under National Security Act.

The agitation took ugly turn on March 18 when a number of Muslim shops in Dariyapur were set ablaze. Many people believe that the Solanki government deliberately gave it a communal turn in order to discredit the agitation against reservations. However, this is too simplistic and other political parties, especially the BJP cannot be exonerated. In this phase about 15 people were killed in police firing and stabbing incidents.

However, what happened during the third and fourth week of April was far worse. The worst incidents of communal nature occurred on 22nd April in what is known as the Bapunagar slum which is mostly inhabited by poor Muslims either working in mills or doing odd jobs. First, there was an attack from the surrounding buildings belonging to the upper caste Hindus. This was repulsed by the Muslims. However, after a brief lull a large mob descended on block 16, Indira Garib Nagar. The assault went on for the whole night. The police and the SRP were actively involved in the assault.

According to many who survived the carnage, one Mr. Bhagirath Aryal, a Hindu Mahasabha leader was leading the mob. His two sons Dinesh and Pradip, both activists of the Hindu communalist party RSS, were assisting him. Some other upper caste Hindus also opened fire on the Muslims. Some 2,000 Muslims took refuge in the Amar Chowk relief camp. It was heart rending to see among them 6 small children whose both parents were slaughtered before their eyes.

What is extremely shocking is that the people by and large have become insensitive to such slaughter of human beings. Hundreds are killed and we remain indifferent. Apart from other things such dehumanization is the heaviest cost the Indian society is paying for such communal and caste massacres.

The Gujarat press had raised great outcry when some police excesses were committed on the upper caste Hindus. But the press remained silent when hundreds of poor "wretches" were slaughtered by the communal fanatics with the active assistance of the police and SRP. After all these poor "wretches" must die like dogs.

Until today, the situation in Ahmedabad and Baroda is far from satisfactory. The anti-reservationists are bent upon having their pound of flesh. They take vow after vow to continue the agitation till their final goal of doing away with all reservations is achieved. Violence and murderous campaign seems to be paying,



## Health for none: The Bhopal Saga

Mazahar Ullah

Bhopal: Even five months after the world's worst industrial disaster, the people of Bhopal—popularly known as the city of lakes, are yet to recover from the shock and continue to suffer from long-term effects of deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) which spewed from the Union Carbide plant, an Indian subsidiary of the Union Carbide Corp., USA, on the night of december 2.

More than 2,500 innocent people perished in this disaster and nearly 200,000 people are still suffering from various ailments.

Even today, five months later, hundreds of patients still throng the two main hospitals of Bhopal, Hamidia Hospital and the new 30-bed hospital especially started by the Madhya Pradesh government to cater to the needs of victims. Apart from these two hospitals there are several polyclinics and dispensaries run by the government.

The summer turned out to be specially hot this year as if to take revenge against those whom the winter of December left alive.

More than 600 patients daily visit what is popularly known as the DIG Bungalow hospital located just near the Union Carbide Plant. The hospital was set up to cater to local people. One of the senior doctors admitted that out of these 600 patients coming daily, 300 are new patients. They all had similar complaints and symptomatic treatment has provided only temporary relief.

Women, especially of the affected areas like Jai Prakash Nagar, Kainchi Chola, Chola Mandir, Phoot Maq-

bara, Railway colony, Risaldar colony, all located within the radius of 1 km of the factory have many gynecological problems. Their main complaint is excessive white vaginal discharge so much so that their clothes get soiled. This complaint is not only from the people of the worst affected areas but also of women from mildly and moderately affected areas. In addition, many women complain of irregularities in their menstrual cycle, some having four to five periods a month. Some of the lactating women said that despite every effort to maintain nutrition, their milk output has gone down and the taste of milk has changed. Infants have lost appetite, many complained.

Most of the people residing in the affected areas were manual laborers. Now they are unable to do physical labor. Some cannot even lift 10 kg of weight. Take the case of Abdul Latif, a resident of Jai Prakash Nagar, collapsed after collecting 12 kg wheat being distributed by the Government. He was rushed to the hospital and doctors advised him not to lift any weight until he has completely recovered.

People cannot walk even ordinary distances. Women cannot perform their household chores; some take several hours to prepare family meals. One of the common complaints is impaired vision.

The people of Bhopal have unending problems and in the absence of any specific treatment, they have to depend upon symptomatic treatment which gives only temporary relief. These patients need personalized treatment but this is rarely available.

A victim of MIC gas shields her burning eyes from light





# First Major Medical Survey on Bhopal Gas Victims 80% of Residents within 2 Km of Carbide Plant Sick

Daya Varma

The report entitled "Medical Survey on 'Bhopal Gas Victims' Between 104 to 109 Days After Exposure to MIC Gas", released on May 2, 1985 is the first major documentation of the health condition of Bhopal residents.

The 45-page document is the outcome of a medical survey conducted by Drs. V.N. Acharya, S.R. Naik, A.A. Mahashur, S. Irani, S. Shah, A.V. Potnis, A. Mehta, R.A. Balerao, Q.B. Maskati, M.Y. Rawal, I.N. Hinduja, N. Shlotri, S. Kidwai and H. Nazareth with the consultative advice of Drs. S.R. Kamath, M.D. Kelkar and J.P. Nagmi and 7 paramedical personnel from Bombay Municipal Corporation.

A total of 44 volunteers assisted in this impressive study, which was coordinated by Suhasini Mulay. The study was organized by Nagrik Rahat aur Punarvas Committee (Citizens Relief and Rehabilitation Committee) in collaboration with Voluntary Health Association of India and with the cooperation of Bhopal Relief Trust, Bombay.

The survey conducted between March 16 and 21, 1985, nearly 100 days after the methyl isocyanate (MIC) leak from the Union Carbide Plant on December 2, 1984 examined a total of 569 victims, which included 198 women, 160 men and 211 children below the age of 14. In addition 172 volunteers who had not been affected by MIC served as controls.

The medical team divided the victims in two major groups: 446 Subjects of Group 1 lived within 0.5 to 2 km of the Union Carbide factory; Group 2 comprised of 123 victims who lived 8 km or more from the factory. The location of the residents in relation to the Union Carbide plant served as a means of establishing the degree of exposure to MIC. For example 74.4% of the patients from Group 1 had run away from home during the accident on December 2-3 while only 8% from Group 2 had left their homes. 30.5% of subjects in Group 1 had experienced death in their family, which was not true for any of the subjects who lived 8 km or more from the plant (Group 2 subjects).

The study finds that 85.4% of victims from Group 1 (0.5-2 km from plant) had moderate to severe medical illness. On the other hand only 32.8% of subjects living 8 km from the plant had medical illness, which was of mild nature. 94.6% of subjects living within 2 km of the plant had some form of respiratory symptoms while 22.3% of those living 8 km away suffered from these symptoms. Burning and watering of eyes was experienced by 90.7% of residents within 2 km distance and by 42% of those living at 8 km. Symptoms like vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain was experienced by 53% of Group 1 and 1.3% of Group 2 subjects. Neuromuscular symptoms, such as a weakness of muscles or a loss of coordination was present in 43.6% of subjects living within 2 km of the plant. None living at 8 km or more had such symptoms. On the basis of these symptoms, the conclusion of the study was that even people living 8 km away from the plant were subjected to toxic effects of MIC although to a much lesser degree.

On the whole the total persistent disabilities in children were more marked than in adults and "psychological impact likely to jeopardise healthy mental growth was evident in many of them."

Out of the 198 females examined 100 had persistent gynecological symptoms, the most common being excessive vaginal discharge. The study included 38 women who were pregnant at the time of the gas tragedy; "29 of them had first or second trimester abortion. Uterine growth of 7 of the 17 women who maintained their pregnancy, was retarded, indicating that the fetus was not growing normally."

The study found that eye symptoms which were experienced by 90.7% of the subjects from Group 1 at the time of the accident was experienced by only 65.6% at the time of the study 100 days later. Although there was a decrease in vision in these patients, none had complete blindness.

Radiological study of the chest of 394 subjects revealed that 55% had their lungs adversely affected.

The study also found that Bhopal residents had much higher levels of thiocyanates than the normal Bombay population. Thiocyanate levels are indicative of chronic cyanide ingestion and these findings suggest that methyl isocyanate might have been partially converted to cyanide and then to thiocyanate. High thiocyanate levels are also found in Bhopal water. The medical team apprehends that chronic ingestion of high levels of thiocyanate may reduce thyroid gland function, because these chemicals are known to block the thyroid gland.

The medical team estimates that out of 250,000 Bhopal residents believed to have been exposed to MIC on December 2-3, 1984, 43,864 suffer from mild to moderate and 63,385 suffer from severe medical disability.

The medical team recommends continued monitoring of the affected population for at least 3 years.

## Judge in Union Carbide Trial Picks Three Lawyers

Federal Judge John Keenan appointed a three-member executive committee of lawyers to coordinate the litigation against the Union Carbide Corporation seeking damages for the victims of the Bhopal gas leak disaster from the Union Carbide's subsidiary in India. Those selected to the executive committee are Michael Ciresi, who represents the Indian government, FL Bailey of New York and S. Chesley of Cincinnati, who are lawyers of private victims.

Over 100 lawyers representing private victims could not unanimously agree on their two representatives. Judge Keenan had given the lawyers until April 23 to unanimously nominate their representatives and announced that he would appoint them if they could not come to an agreement.



## Will Jayewardene's Delhi visit Solve Sri Lanka Tamil Problem?

R.N. Raju

President Jayewardene visited Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during June 2nd and 3rd. The visit, though anticipated for a long time, was suddenly arranged as the political situation in Sri Lanka continues to deteriorate. The details of the talks are not available. Also participating in the talks were Sri Lanka's Minister for National Security Lalith Athulathmudali and Indian Defense Minister Narasimha Rao.

It is believed that the Delhi talks were aimed at exploring the terms of a possible negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Jayewardene is reported ready to make some concessions if the Tamil militants would lay down their arms. Indian government is being asked to act against the base of support the militants are presumed to have in Tamilnadu.

The Delhi talks were held at a moment when the relations between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments were at a low ebb. In the previous week, Sri Lankan spokesmen had taken exception to the statements made by India's Minister of State for External affairs, Khurshed Alam Khan in the Rajya Sabha on the situation in Sri Lanka. Also, the Sri Lanka government was reviewing whether it should attend the scheduled Ministerial meeting of the South Asia Regional Cooperation (SARC) in Bhutan as a protest against the statements of Khan.

Within Sri Lankan government itself, voices of dissent recently appeared on the way the Tamils issue is being handled. Cabinet Minister Thondaman who represents the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka, demanded that there be a quick end to the "vast human tragedy" taking place in the island. "All this continuous talk about violence is of little avail. The Palestinian Liberation Organization which had used violence in its struggle has been given recognition by the U.N. of which both India and Sri Lanka are member states. Is there no ways of adopting similar approaches in the Sri Lankan situation and quickly bringing about an end to the vast human tragedy," Thondaman said. Considering the fact that the Indian Tamils have so far remained outside the center of ethnic conflict, the views of Thondaman who represents this significant minority suggests that the Indian Tamils are slowly being drawn into the conflict because of the nature of state violence unleashed against the Sri Lanka Tamils.

While President Jayewardene is trying to talk to Delhi, the violence and the attack on civilians continue unabated in Sri Lanka. Will Jayewardene's talks with Prime Minister Gandhi resolve the Tamils issue? The Sri Lanka President seems intent on securing Indian Government's aid in seeking out and eliminating any base of support the Tamil militants may have in Tamilnadu. He also has been merely reiterating the demand that the Tamil militants lay down their arms as a precondition for initiating any talks with them. No new proposals have been formulated by the Sri Lanka government in the past many months while increased expenditure on state

security and widespread acquisition of weapons and armaments have been emphasised. The security forces and the army continue to have a free hand in their attacks on the Tamil civilians. Indeed, the Jayewardene government has proposed the policy of arming "civilians" for their self-defense against the attacks by the Tamil militants. There is no better way to ensure state sponsored violence among the ethnically divided population than this.

While talks with the Indian government are good from the point of view of reducing inter-governmental tensions, they are in no way capable of resolving the Tamils issues because the central questions are being avoided by the Sri Lankan government. India's assistance is sought to weaken the Tamil militants rather than to address the legitimate issues raised by the Tamil community over the past many years.

The Indian government has set up an advisory group on Sri Lanka as a response to the representation made by the all-party delegation from Tamilnadu. The advisory committee under the chairmanship of Home Minister Chavan includes Khurshed Alam Khan, G. Parthasarathy and the Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari, among others. But no specific role has been identified for this group and it is uncertain what it can accomplish with respect to the real issues in Sri Lanka.

President Jayewardene can begin to address the problem and proceed towards its possible resolution only if there is a fundamental change in the attitude of the Sri Lanka government. A number of steps should be taken immediately by the Jayewardene government if it is to succeed in convincing the Tamilian minority of its genuine desire to resolve the ethnic issue. These steps include the immediate removal of the security forces from the areas where the Tamils are concentrated, abandoning the policy of settlement of Sinhala population in these regions, unconditional amnesty to everyone involved in the political violence of the past many months, and the immediate convening of political talks among the various ethnic, and religious communities in Sri Lanka. As part of these steps, the government should also provide immediate economic relief to the victims of violence who have lost lives and property in the past year. Equally important will be the repatriation of the huge influx of refugees who have fled to India after giving them guarantees of human rights conditions. The Sri Lanka government has the power to implement these steps and start the process towards a political solution to the ethnic problem. This will be the way, the Jayewardene government can maintain the integrity of the country and concentrate its resources on useful developmental expenditure rather than on wasteful military expenditure. As long as the Jayewardene government maintains its present intransigence, no amount of its meetings with the Indian government can lead it anywhere near a solution to the island's problems.



# Gandhi's Foreign Tour: Moscow and Washington Both Included

R.N. Raju

Prime Minister Gandhi's first major foreign tour includes both Moscow and Washington. Gandhi visited Moscow in the third week of May and is scheduled to be in Washington in the middle of June. The U.S. visit is part of the Prime Minister's multination tour including stops at France, Egypt and Algeria. The choice of Moscow and Washington and the precedence given to the Moscow visit over that to Washington have all given rise to various speculations and political interpretations.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as he took power following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, was perceived as oriented more towards the Western world. The rhetorical emphasis on high technology, the budgetary changes opening up more to multinationals and elements purely of personal style all contributed to the speculation that there will be a marked tilt towards the United States. To some extent, the Moscow visit has dampened that view. At the same time, various comments of the Prime Minister are being analysed to suggest that there may be improved relations with the U.S.

Gandhi's visit to Moscow as the first foreign capital, suggests the importance placed by the two countries to their mutual relations. During this visit, two agreements were signed, one providing one billion roubles in credit for Soviet industrial goods and services and the other stipulating basic guidelines for economic, trade and scientific cooperation until the year 2000. Presently, India is the leading trade partner of the Soviet Union among the developing countries, the volume of trade is expected to be about 3.6 billion US dollars this year. Moscow is also the chief arms supplier to India. Advanced weapons including the MIG29 fighter planes and the T-72 tanks are being provided by the Soviet Union.

The new trade agreement provides credit over the next 15 years to finance a new thermal power plant in Bihar, to setting up open cast mines in Jharia and Singrauli coalfields, for oil exploration and for machine building. Also an institute for designing coal projects will be set up.

During the Moscow visit, Prime Minister Gandhi expressed support for some of the political positions advocated by the Soviet Union which are opposed to the US interests. These include the opposition to the Star Wars space weapons development program in the US and the economic embargo on Nicaragua imposed by the US. Also, he refrained from any criticism of the Soviet actions in Afghanistan. It is however clear that the viewpoints on the first two issues are shared by a large number of countries including some of those strongly

allied to the US. Also the opposition to Star Wars program and to the embargo on Nicaragua are shared by a large number of developing and non-aligned countries. On the question of Afghanistan, while on the one hand justifying the Soviet invasion there, Prime Minister Gandhi also expressed the view that "we are not for any country to interfere or intervene in the internal affairs of another country." The Soviet leader Gorbachev proposed an Asian Forum on security, a vague reminder of the Asian Collective Security plan of former Soviet President Brezhnev. But Prime Minister Gandhi declined to take up this proposal.

Both in Moscow and since his return to Delhi, Gandhi has repeatedly stressed his government's desire to achieve a better understanding with the United States. The US is the largest trading partner of India, having overtaken Soviet Union few years ago. Most recently, a major agreement on technology transfer was signed for high technology devices like computers, and electronic and telecommunication equipment. The agreement reached during the recent visit to Delhi by the US Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige, has been seen as an indicator of serious US interest in wooing India closer to it. Indeed, the Prime Minister's visit is partly devoted to the inauguration of the Festival of India program in the US.

On various international issues, Prime Minister Gandhi has expressed strong criticism of the US. The issue most emphasised has been the support to Pakistan given by the US including the F-16 jet fighters and various other weapon systems. The United States is committed to a six year program of economic and military assistance to Pakistan involving over 3 billion US dollars. Gandhi has charged that the US has not done enough to prevent Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons. He has also criticized the US as an obstructive force in India's efforts to get economic aid from international agencies.

In spite of the disapproval of US actions on a number of international issues, Gandhi is expected to develop stronger trade and technical relations with the United States during his weeklong visit here. Speaking in Moscow he had commented that he had not given any commitment to the Soviet leader Gorbachev that India would not approach closer to the West. One may anticipate that relations between India and both the superpowers could improve and at the present time both the United States and the Soviet Union are interested in

STRONG TIES WITH INDIA.

## Devastating Cyclone in Bangladesh

A cyclone and a tidal wave swept over the islands of Bangladesh's coast on May 24. According to official sources, at least 6000 people are already known to be dead, with tens of thousands missing. The Press Trust of India reported that over 25,000 people were killed. A million people have been made homeless. Bangladesh President Hussain Mohammad Ershad described the killer wave as "the worst tragedy in Bangladesh's history."

This natural disaster is especially a big blow to the recent efforts of this small poor nation, often portrayed in the western press as the "basket case", to become self-sufficient in rice production. The country has been affected by many major natural disasters with recurrent floods every year. A gigantic cyclone in 1970 killed estimated 300,000 people on the country's southern coast. In 1962 about 25,000 people died in another tidal wave.



# Shiv Sena Controls Bombay Corporation

**Kishan Bajwa**

Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena, which was considered to be a "spent" force following its rout in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections, emerged the single largest party in the Bombay Corporation elections defeating the Congress. It secured 74 seats in the 170 seat Corporation, only 12 seats short of an absolute majority. Congress(I) could win only 37 seats. A Shiv Sainik, Chhagan Bhujbal has subsequently been elected the Mayor of Bombay.

The Shiv Sena was formed in 1966 on the slogan of Maharashtra for Maharashtrians; but according to many, its formation was encouraged by the then Congress Chief Minister Vasant Nayak primarily to use it against trade unions controlled by Socialists and Communists. It is considered a party of goons and thugs who were responsible for riots against non-Maharashtrians, mostly the South Indians, in 1969. It has also been instrumental in breaking many strikes and trade unions and political killings. Its chief Bal Thackeray's speech in which he had insulted the Prophet Mohammad and Muslims was responsible for a large scale rioting in Bhiwandi area last year in which over 400 people were killed.

According to various news reports and analyses, it appears that Shiv Sena won the Corporation election because of infighting within the Congress(I). The turnout for the election was also low - around 40%. Shiv Sena made an issue out of the equivocal answers deliberately given by Vasant Dada Patil to what appear to be a planted statement by a Shiv Sainik Navalkar in the legislative council about rumors that some interested parties were trying to separate Bombay from Maharashtra. Chief Minister Patil added fuel to the fire by adding credence to Navalkar's statement by saying that some people were indeed working to separate the capital and that the people of the state must be prepared to fight and he himself was willing lay down his life for the cause of keeping city and state united. Shiv Sena instantly made an issue out of this alleged move of separating of Bombay from Maharashtra.

Patil is currently facing considerable opposition from within the Congress(I) state unit including his estranged wife Shalini and there are rumors that the Congress(I) high command is not happy with his performance. Although Thackeray thanked Murli Deora, Bombay Regional Congress Committee President, with whom Patil does not get along, for Sena's victory, both the opposition leader Sharad Pawar and Vasant Dada's wife called the corporation results a joint victory for Thackeray and Patil. Shalini Patil also predicted doom for her husband's ministry because of his confrontationalist attitude in dealing with dissension within the party.

Patil is allegedly relying on Shiv Sena for showing his muscle power in any forthcoming power struggle within the Congress(I) ranks in the state.

## SENA'S PLANS COME OUT IN THE OPEN

Soon after the victory of his party in the corporation elections, Thackeray announced that his party would set a cut off year for deportation of those who

came to the city from states other than Maharashtra; 1972 and 1974 are two possible cut off years mentioned by Shiv Sena. Thackeray also added that his party would ruthlessly stop the influx of people and deny business licenses to non-Maharashtrians. Thackeray's proposal got support from Patil who said that "something needed to be done" to prevent the city from further decaying.

The fascist ideology of Thackeray and Shiv Sena came out openly in an interview published in the Illustrated Weekly. Thackeray who openly professes benevolent dictatorship declared that no hawkers will be allowed thereafter in Bombay. In order to top the influx of outsiders into Bombay, Thackeray plans to introduce licenses and those who do not have licenses, will be removed. Branding his politics as practical socialism, Thackeray also announced that he would demolish any unauthorised hutments. Over 40-50% of Bombay's population lives on footpath and slums.

Thackeray's inflammatory remarks are likely to create tension in an otherwise peaceful and quiet cosmopolitan and will make non-Maharashtrians insecure living there.

Thackeray haranguing an audience:



HOSHILAL



## Trial of Accused in Gandhi's Assassination Opens

After several adjournments, the trial of the three defendants accused in Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination was to convene on May 24. The defendants are the alleged assassin of Indira Gandhi, Satwant Singh, and his alleged fellow-conspirators, Balbir Singh and Kehar Singh. Another alleged assassin Beant Singh had been killed on the day of the assassination, Oct. 31, by the Indo-Tibetan Special Guards when Beant Singh and Satwant Singh allegedly tried to escape after they had surrendered. The trial is to take place in Tihar jail near New Delhi.

Earlier, Satwant Singh denied having made any confessional statement and charged that investigating agencies had not "properly" investigated the murder to hide the "identity of the person who masterminded it." Satwant Singh made this statement in an application on May 6 in the court of the Additional chief Metropolitan Magistrate, SL Khanna. Satwant added, "the bullets came from many directions but the prosecution does not look into other directions. I am surprised." He added, "In its anxiety to hide the true facts and to suppress truth, the prosecution had fabricated amongst other things the so-called statement under a section of the Criminal Procedure Code attributed to me."

Satwant Singh accused that the so-called confession was prepared by the prosecution for dual purpose - for publicity and to prejudice my defense. He went on to add, "Confessions are kept in a sealed cover. Here was publicity material masquerading as my confessions." Satwant Singh also said that he did not apply to any magistrate or police officer to make a confessional statement, and that he could have told his counsel if he wanted to confess.

According to the police, Satwant Singh disclosed in his confessions the assassination conspiracy hatched by Beant Singh, Kehar Singh, Balbir Singh, and him.

Satwant Singh also accused the investigating authorities of torturing him mentally and physically. He charged that despite his repeated requests, a copy of Beant Singh's autopsy report and Satwant's injury report have not been supplied to him.

### Noted Lawyer Lekhi to defend Satwant Singh

A noted lawyer Pran Nath Lekhi, along with another lawyer Rupinder Singh Sodhi, has agreed to defend Satwant Singh. Lekhi who is known for exposing Soviet spies in India, resigned from BJP because of a possible conflict between party discipline and professional ethic, as well as due to a possible hate campaign against BJP because of Lekhi's taking this case. The party was not reportedly happy over Lekhi taking this job when he was approached by Sodhi. In an interview published in the Illustrated Weekly of India, Lekhi admitted that it was a hard decision and he took over a month to decide.

No body could have doubted Lekhi's credibility, but soon after he announced to agree to defend Satwant Singh, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, other Congress(I) leaders as well as CPM leader and West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu strongly condemned Lekhi's move.

Rajiv Gandhi went to the extent of accusing Lekhi of having defended Nathuram Godse - a charge Lekhi denied.

In the interview, Lekhi characterized Satwant Singh's trial as a "political trial in which the accused persons are not the pro forma accused persons mentioned in the trial."

Below we reproduce some excerpts of that interview:

According to Lekhi, "there are three elements in the challan. Firstly, it is expressly stated that the Sikhs murdered Mrs. Gandhi. What is the purpose of mentioning their religion? Murder is a secular offence, it is not something that only Sikhs do. So if I can disabuse the prosecution for this slant, I think it will be a very humble contribution but of great dimension.

"The second element is the reference to the Operation Bluestar. This is very strange, considering that we are supporting Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka. This low-level political appeal is hurting the country's integrity.

"If this trial had started earlier, and was not held in camera, the Lok Sabha and assembly election results would have been different.

"By continuously saying that the Sikhs are secessionists, we might actually turn them into secessionists. We hope to show that Operation Bluestar was quite avoidable.

"Thirdly, we come to Bhindranwale. Rajiv Gandhi and Bhindranwale had a common political mother in Mrs. Gandhi. There was no connection between Bhindranwale and the accused, yet his name appears in the charge-sheet. It is very important for India's unity that the real guilty men in Mrs. Gandhi's murder are exposed. History points to a conspiracy by the guilty men and woman of the Congress(I) with Bhindranwale against the unity and integrity of India, and this finds no mention in the charge-sheet. It is not Satwant Singh but India's unity and integrity which are on trial. And, I think it is a privilege for me to be an advocate of India's unity and integrity."

"Every trial starts with the presumption that the accused are innocent. But this remains a theoretical presumption only, if there is a pre-trial through the press. You might recall that Nanavati killed the pramateur of his wife and because of favorable publicity for his act and despite the court verdict against him, he earned a reprieve. After all, judges are human beings and do read the newspapers.

"If the courts acquit Satwant Singh, Balbir Singh and Kehar Singh, it will be the judiciary's finest hour in India - that is, if the judges honestly believe that the accused are not guilty."



## Akali Dal in a Serious Crisis

KISHAN BAJWA

The announcement of Bhindranwale's father Baba Joginder Singh dissolving all factions of the Akali Dal and establishing a 9-member adhoc coordinating committee of the new united Akali Dal has put the Akali Dal on a disastrous path. Joginder Singh claimed to have been given the authority both by Longowal and Talwandi to do anything for Panthic unity including the dissolution of the Akali Dal. The committee announced by the Baba consisted of Bhindranwale's brother Jagjit Singh; Manjit Singh, a brother of All India Sikh Federation's slain President and comrade-in-arms of Bhindranwale, Amrik Singh; Simranjit Singh Mann, an IPS officer who resigned from the police force following the army attack on the Golden Temple, went underground and was subsequently arrested by the police on suspicion of masterminding Indira Gandhi's assassination; Harinder Singh, a former diplomat who resigned from his post in Norway and sought asylum; Gurtej Singh, a former bureaucrat; as well as Akali leaders Badal, Longowal, Tohra and Talwandi.

Joginder Singh's announcement was a like a bomb shell and took many by a surprise. Soon after his announcement, various groups and factions within the Akali Dal began to muster support for and against the new adhoc committee. Both Longowal and Badal called Joginder Singh's move as illegal and unconstitutional whereas Talwandi and some of Badal's supporters, including Atma Singh, who was under attack by the SGPC, endorsed Baba's plan. It is widely believed that this was a successful coup planned by Talwandi to oust Longowal whom he has accused of compromising with the government.

It was however very clear from statements and endorsements that the Baba had the support of the militant section of the Sikh community even though the purpose, the charter, and/or demands of the new adhoc committee were not made public. Joginder Singh did not feel any need either to give any reasons for including various individuals in the coordinating committee. Badal and Tohra's role vis a vis the new adhoc committee was wavering as they seemed to have their legs in both the camps; there were reports that both Badal and Tohra were interested in seeing Longowal's base erode so that their respective faction emerge the strongest. But it appeared a very dangerous game which was more like playing into the designs of fanatics.

A few days after Joginder Singh's announcement, Longowal called for a general body meeting of the Akali Dal delegates on May 17 to discuss these matters. Joginder Singh challenged with a meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa. Following considerable confusion, Longowal was finally forced to cancel the May 17 meeting. On May 11, he, along with Badal, resigned from the leadership positions of the party and announced to remain in the party as ordinary members. Tohra also submitted his resignation to the SGPC which did not accept it.

Soon after Longowal's resignation, Joginder Singh

opened with considerable fanfare the office of the new Akali Dal inside the Golden Temple precincts.

In an attempt to defuse the crisis, jathedars of the Akali Dal convened a meeting on May 22 to consider Longowal's resignation. In the meeting, they rejected Longowal's resignation. After considerable pressure, Longowal was persuaded to withdraw his resignation and continue as the President. There were also reports that Badal and Tohra were also withdrawing their resignations from the leadership positions.

Joginder Singh described the decision of the Longowal's faction to maintain its identity as "illegal."

These maneuvers and events have demonstrated how deep the divisions are within the Akali Dal and the Sikh community. They also point to a serious lack of any seasoned and astute political leadership within the Sikh community which can lead them and Punjab out of this grave crisis. Every leader seems to outwit others to cling to their gaddis without thinking about the outcome and damage being caused to the community as well as Punjab by his actions. Though this may not appear at the surface, but deep inside the non-Sikh communities are increasingly becoming nervous over these events within the Akali Dal in which fanatics and militants are making increasingly provocative speeches in a hope to increase their following. These events are only giving credence to center's position that it does not know with whom it should negotiate and that the Akali Dal does not have any leaders.

## Longowal Visits New Delhi Demands An Inquiry into Extremist Activities

KISHAN BAJWA

Addressing a gathering of academicians at Delhi University, Akali Dal leader Harchand Singh Longowal demanded an inquiry by a Supreme Court judge into the separatist and extremist activities in Punjab, the demand Longowal was repeatedly making even prior to the army action on the Golden Temple in June last year.

Longowal declared that Sikhs were not separatists and that the Akali Dal was against extremists; he added that if the Sikhs were found guilty of encouraging such forces, they should be punished according to the law of the land. Longowal charged the government with trying to malign the Sikh community by calling them separatist or extremists and asked it to find the root of extremism.

Longowal said that his party and the Sikh community believed in the unity and integrity of the country.

Longowal was visiting Delhi in the last week of April at the invitation of a group of concerned Punjabis and the National Sikh Forum, as well as to talk to the victims of the anti-Sikh riots following Mrs. Gandhi's assassination.

Longowal described the Punjab problem as the country's most sensitive issue and said that the Akali Dal(L) was prepared to hold talks with the government



to find an amicable solution provided the government accepted the four conditions: immediate scrapping of special courts, leniency in dealing with Sikh army deserters, release of all Sikh students against whom there were no cases of violence, and an inquiry into all cases of November violence as had been done in the case of the Delhi riots. According to Longowal, the acceptance of these conditions would help create an atmosphere congenial for the settlement of the Punjab problem. Longowal also asked for paying compensation to those who lost their relatives and property during the Operation Bluestar.

Referring to the Anandpur Sahib resolution, Longowal said it was not secessionist and there was no mention of any separate state. He reiterated that his party had not at any stage demanded Khalistan. The resolution only demands autonomy not only for Punjab but for other states as well.

#### MEETING WITH OPPOSITION

Longowal and another Akali leader Surjit Singh Barnala met opposition leaders in New Delhi. The opposition leaders repeatedly pleaded with the Akali leaders to desist from characterizing as 'martyrs' the assassins of Indira Gandhi, as was reportedly done in some congregations in Amritsar. Barnala reportedly told the opposition leaders that the Akali Dal had taken note of their suggestions and would not henceforth describe the assassins as martyrs.

#### FIGHT IS AGAINST CONGRESS

Addressing a big Sunday congregation at the Rakab Ganj Gurdwara, Longowal openly declared on April 28 that his party's fight was directed against no community but the Congress party and those ruling at the Center, as they had been trying to suppress and "destroy" the Sikhs whose patriotism had never been in doubt.

Longowal who was reportedly given a rousing welcome, warned that the Sikh youth were in a very angry mood, and that if actions are not taken to create a better atmosphere, they might "do something."

Addressing the gathering, another Akali leader Surjit Singh Barnala said that slogans alone would not produce a solution. The need of the hour was to prove that the Sikhs were a disciplined people. It was only through discipline that the desired objectives could be achieved, he said.

Amrinder Singh of National Sikh Forum, former Congress(I) MP, said that the Sikhs should remain vigilant and defeat all government and Congress designs to divide them. The community has suffered horrifying miseries during the riots for which Congress was responsible.

Khushwant Singh said that it should be clearly understood by all that Hindus were not responsible for the riots. In fact, they helped to save Sikhs risking their lives. The riots were the handiwork of Congressmen and there was evidence of their involvement. Some of them were ministers and members of parliament.

## FBI Uncovers Plot to Kill Gandhi and Bhajan Lal

A successful FBI sting operation has apparently successfully foiled a plot by a group of Sikhs to assassinate Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal, and attack various strategic installations in India. The FBI director William Webster said that the bureau penetrated a plan to "train a group of Sikhs in the use of firearms and explosives."

According to affidavits filed in the district court in New York, two of the group's members, Gurpartak Birk and Lal Singh told an FBI undercover agent that their purpose was to "cause revolutionary overthrow of the Government of India." Birk has been arrested, but Lal Singh along with another person charged with planning the assassination, Ammand Singh, are being looked for.

In a separate indictment, Birk and four others - Sukhvinder Singh, Virinder Singh, Jassir Sendhu and Jatinder Singh Ahluwalia - have been charged with conspiring to kill Bhajan Lal in New Orleans where he was receiving medical treatment. All of them have been arrested and have been denied bail.

According to the Justice Department, Birk and Lal Singh asked an FBI informant, identified as "A", to train their group in the use of explosives, automatic weapons, chemical warfare and urban guerrilla tactics. They also requested weapons, plastic explosives, false passports for seven of the group's members, and asked "A" to travel to India as group's adviser. The discussions between the group's members and the agent "A" were reportedly videotaped.

According to a US official, those involved in the plot claim to belong to a movement advocating Khalistan, but there was reportedly no evidence that they were part of an established group in North America or India.

The Sikh Association of America condemned the plots and its chairman asked the Justice Department and the FBI to investigate the connections of the accused Sikhs.

The Review quoted an Indian diplomat as saying that FBI's thwarting of the plots should "stop the the usual rumours of CIA actions against India." Both US and Indian officials were quoted by the Review as saying that the FBI operation is likely to have a positive impact on US-India relations.

Major-General JS Bhullar of the World Sikh Organization expressed surprise on hearing the FBI's uncovering of the assassination plot. He said, "I am surprised. We have instructed our members not to indulge in violence in foreign countries. We believe in a peaceful policy. We ask our members to cooperate with the authorities and obey local laws."

The security for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's forthcoming visit to US starting on June 11 has been beefed up.



# NEWSBRIEFS

## Fifty Indians Who Matter

The Illustrated Weekly of India also listed fifty Indians who matter at present in its January 27 issue this year with the following introduction: "Who are the fifty Indians who really matter today? Men and women from different walks of life, different disciplines — some well-known; others not so well-known; a few from shadows, quietly working away to build the India of their dreams. Thinkers; healers; singers and musicians; politicians and poets; crusading journalists, civil-rights activists and campaigners; warriors for the protection of the environment; traditional philosophers, jurists, high profile sportsmen; film makers, actors, playwrights. A fascinating cross-section. The men and women of our times."

The names of these fifty Indians are: Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi; Baba Amte who is working among leprosy patients and the handicapped in Maharashtra, as well as campaigning for ecological issues; sitarist and composer Ravi Shankar; photo journalist Raghu Rai; singer MS Subbulakshmi; physicist ECG Sudarshan; Sunderlal Bahuguna of the Chipko movement; BJP President Atal Behari Vajpayee; civil servant Lakshmi Kant Jha; political scientist and civil-rights activist Rajni Kothari; Mother Teresa; retired General Jagjit Singh Aurora; cartoonist RK Laxman; playwright Vijay Tendulkar; labor activist Shankar Guha Niyogi of the Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangathan in Dilli-Rajahara Durg district of Madhya Pradesh; economist Manmohan Singh; cricketer Sunil Gavaskar; cartoonist and literary writer Ottupulakkal Velukutty Vijayan; molecular biophysicist GN Ramachandran; journalist, satirist and political activist Cho Ramaswamy; physicist S. Chandrasekhar; dancer Birju Maharaj; Janata party leader Ramakrishna Hegde; jurist and civil-rights leader VM Tarkunde; sprinter PT Usha; film director Satyajit Ray; Telugu Desam President and film star NT Ramarao; scholar Laxmanshastri Joshi; inventor of Jaipur artificial foot Pramod Karan Sethi; singer Lata Mangeshkar; film star Amitabh Bachchan; classical vocalist Bhimsen Joshi; peasant leader Sharad Joshi; novelist UR Ananthamurthy; architect Charles Correa; ornithologist Salim Ali; journalist and writer Arun Shourie; Dalit Mazdoor Kisan party President Charan Singh; artist MF Hussain; Chief Justice-Designate of the Supreme Court PN Bhagwati; economist Raj Krishna; neuro-physiologist Avtar Singh Paintal; Chandi Prasad Bhatt of the Chipko movement; industrialist JRD Tata; Abdul Hameed of Hamdard Wafk Laboratories; industrialist and press baron RN Goenka; cricketer Kapil Dev; CPM leader Jyoti Basu; conductor Zubin Mehta; and journalist and science-technology historian Claude Alvares.

## CPM Leader Sundarayya Dies

P. Sundarayya, a veteran leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), died on May 19. He was 72.

Sundarayya joined the freedom struggle as a student leader and was a member of the Congress Socialist Party, which he later left to join the Communist Party of India.

He was one of the leaders in organizing the Telengana peasant movement against the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Indian government. He wrote a book on the Telengana movement, giving his interpretation of the strengths and weaknesses of the movement and why it had to be withdrawn following the police action ordered by the Nehru government.

Sundarayya went to CPM when the party split in 1964 and was its first general secretary, the post he held for 14 years.

## Court Throws out Petition for a Ban on the Koran

A considerable uproar was created in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan following a petition by Chandmal Chopra and Setal Singh filed in a Calcutta court in which they demanded a ban on the Koran because they claimed that "the Koran preached violence against infidels."

Calcutta High Court Judge Bimal Chandra Basak threw out the petition on May 13 saying "by this petition, the petitioners insult or attempt to insult the Muslim religion. It is an affront to Islam's supreme scriptural authority." The Judge added that "to ban the Koran would deprive Muslims of their constitutional rights to profess, practice, and propagate religion."

Basak also wrote "A court could not judge the holy book and the petition should have been dismissed as soon as it was filed."

The petitioners had originally filed their plea on April 18 in the court of Padma Khastagir. Following the admission of the petition, there were numerous protests and criticisms. Muslim lawyers of the Calcutta High Court boycotted Judge Khastagir. There were demonstrations in Kashmir and other parts of India, as well as in Bangladesh in which at least 12 people were killed and many injured.

## Dancers Charge Nepotism

Three prominent Indian classical dancers — Sonal Mansingh, Yamini Krishnamurthi and Uma Sharma — have alleged that nepotism and favoritism are the criteria by which artists were being selected to perform in the forthcoming Festivals of India in France and the US. The three dancers were not included by festival officials to perform in the Festival.

They also objected to the statements made by the Sangeet Akademi Chairman Narayana Menon on a Television interview that those performers who were not picked lacked quality.

The dancers accused that the selection was being done by non-artists and that other artists were being favored because of their connections with the powers-that-be.

The Akademi had recently invited the three dancers to perform at an event to honor the memory of Balasaraswathi, a Bharatanatyam dancer. According to Krishnamurthi, the TV authorities denied the dancers the opportunity to rebut Menon's remarks, so they had no choice but to express their protest by boycotting the Akademi's program commemorating Balasaraswathi.



## Bhagwati New Chief Justice of India

According to the official sources, Supreme Court Judge Prafullachandra Natvarlal Bhagwati will be the Chief Justice of India, with effect from 12th July, 1985. His appointment has reportedly been cleared by the President and Prime Minister.

The present Chief Justice of India YV Chandrachud will retire on July 12. Justice Bhagwati is the senior-most judge in the Supreme Court after Chandrachud.

Bhagwati is known for his critical views of the legal system in India. The Illustrated Weekly of India described Bhagwati's efforts to bring changes to the judicial and legal system as follows: "Thanks to Bhagwati, many prisoners rotting away in jails with no recourse to justice have been given a better deal. For he was the judge who began treating letters addressed to the Supreme Court as writ petitions. And he ensures that the call of justice was not lost in the labyrinthine maze of procedure."

## Highest Air-India Profit

Air India earned its highest profit ever - \$48 million net for the year 1983-84, as reported by the PTI quoting the annual report of the Department of Civil Aviation. However in a response to a question in the parliament, the Minister of State for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Ashok Gehlot, said that Air India incurred a loss of \$4 million on India-US route, \$7 million on India-Canada route and \$7 million on India-England route. Apparently, the company is making the maximum profit on its India-Gulf route.

Indian Airlines is also reported to have made a profit of \$38 million.

## Congress Suffers Defeat in Bye-elections

The jolt to Congress(I) leaders because of the party's not-as-good performance in the March assembly elections as in the Lok Sabha elections, was not yet over, when the Congress(I) received yet another shock. In the recently held bye-elections in 26 assembly constituencies and 2 Lok Sabha contests, Congress(I) could only win 7 assembly seats and 1 Lok Sabha seat.

In Lok Sabha elections, a Janata party candidate in the Baramati constituency in Maharashtra defeated a Congress(I) candidate by over 48000 votes. A Congress(I) candidate defeated however a Janata candidate in the Tiruchendur constituency in Tamil Nadu by over 75000 votes.

For assembly seats, Janata party won both the seats in Karnataka. In Andhra, the ruling Telugu Desam won 2 out of 5 contests; its ally Janata won the Maktal seat; the Majlis party and Congress shared the remaining two seats. In West Bengal also, Congress(I) lost both the seats to the left front. Results in Orissa were the most embarrassing with Congress(I) losing all three contests.

In Bihar, Congress(I) won 2 seats, Janata got one. In UP, Congress(I) lost 2 of the 3 contests. However, in MP, Congress won the only contest; in Rajasthan also, Congress won 2 out of the 4 seats contested.

## 580,000 suffer from Cancer

According to a cancer expert, cancer can be the number one killer disease in India by 2000 if adequate preventive measures are not taken to control the disease. Addressing a workshop on "National Cancer Programme," the Deputy-Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research Usha Luthra attributed the increase in the numbers to the changing pattern of lifestyle and use of tobacco by people.

According to the Greater Bombay Cancer Registry, there were about 580,000 reported cases of cancer in the country. The disease was prevalent among women in all major cities, except Bombay.

Dr. Luthra favored the launching of an anti-smoking drive to control the disease.

## Five Day Work Week for Central Govt. Employees

Central government employees will work a five day week starting June 3 instead of a five-and-a-half-day work week. A government spokesman told this to reporters on May 20.

The working hours during the 5 day work week have been increased by an extra hour.

## India and US Sign a High-Tech Transfer Accord

An agreement for the transfer of high-tech was recently signed between the US and Indian government on May 17. The agreement would allow the transfer of American technology to India in semiconductors, electronics, communications and computers. The agreement was signed during a four-day visit of US Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige.

In an news conference, Baldrige said that the agreement did not cover military or nuclear technology. Baldrige said that since there was concern in the American congress about the possibility of leakage of American technology from India to Russia, the US government had insisted on safeguards for the protection of technology.

## Indo-Soviet Trade

Following are import and export figures of India's trade with Russia: 1979-80: Rs 8.2 billion imports, Ps 6.4 billion exports; 1980-81: Rs 10.1 billion imports, Rs 12.3 billion exports; 1981-82: Rs 11.4 billion imports, Rs 16.6 billion exports; 1982-83: Rs 15.1 billion imports, Rs 15.4 billion exports; 1983-84 provisional: Rs 16.6 billion imports, Rs 13.1 billion exports, resulting in a trade deficit after 3 years.

## Ten Best Films of 1984

The weekly magazine Illustrated Weekly of India published from Bombay listed the ten best films of 1984 in its January 20, 1985 issue: Mukhamukham of Adoor Gopalakrishnan in Malayalam; Saransh of Mahesh Bhatt in Hindi; Ghare Baire of Satyajit Ray in Bengali; Paar of Gautam Ghosh in Hindi; Andhi Gali of Buddhadeb Dasgupta; Maya Miriga of Nirad Mohapatra; Khandhar of Mrinal Sen; Party of Govind Nihlani in Hindi; Tarang of Kumar Shahani in Hindi; and Holi of Ketan Mehta in Hindi.



## National Film Awards Announced

The Hindi feature film, *Damul* (Gallows), won the best film award at the 32nd National Film Festival of India. The movie was directed and produced by Prakash Jha. His film was cited for "boldness in confronting and exposing a highly volatile contemporary injustice in a competent, honest, moving film form."

Naseeruddin Shah was chosen the best actor for his performance in the Hindi film *Paar* (Across) for which Shah had also received an award at the Venice film festival last year. Shabana Azmi was selected for the best actress award for her performance in *Paar* also.

The best direction and screen-play award went to Adoor Gopalakrishnan for *Mukhomukham*.

The best supporting actor award went to Victor Banerjee for his performance in Satyajit Ray's *Ghare Baire*. Rohini Hattangadi won the best supporting actress award for her role in *Party*, a Hindi film directed by Govind Nihalani.

The Indira Gandhi award instituted this year for best first film by a director went to a Tamil Film, *Meendum Oru Kadhal Kathai*, directed by Pratap Pothan and his producer wife Radhika Pothan.

The Nargis Dutt award for best feature film on national integration was given to a Hindi film, *Adami or Aurat*, which was cited for its simplicity of approach in commenting upon the need for love and harmony between communities.

The newly-introduced award for the best film of aesthetic excellence and social relevance providing popular and wholesome entertainment was given to the Bengali film *Kony* produced for the West Bengal government.

The best feature film for family welfare introduced this year is the Hindi film *Mohan Joshi Hajir Ho* by Akhtar Mirza.

*Accident* was adjudged the best film on prohibition in Kannada, produced by Sanket and directed by Shankar Nag.

The Hindi film *Giddh* got the special jury award. The best cinematographer award went to Jehangir Choudhry for the Hindi film *Holi*.

### PHALKE AWARD FOR RAY

The prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke award was bestowed upon Satyajit Ray for his contribution to the Indian cinema. Ray has directed 29 films, mostly in Bengali, including 3 documentaries and 2 short films for television.

## 665 Immigrant Indians Died in Gulf

A total of 665 Indians working in the Gulf region died in 1984. At least 212 of them died in accidents. According to Union Labor Minister, T. Anjiah, 369 deaths were reported in Saudi Arabia and 203 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). At least 49 Indians died in Iraq.

The number of deaths of workers in 1982 and 1983 was 344 and 398 in Saudi Arabia; 253 and 236 in UAE; and 103 and 100 respectively in Iraq.

## Dowry not Prevalent in Assam

According to a letter by Surabhi Kakati published in *India Abroad*, May 17, the practice of offering and demanding dowry in the form of an established (hence considered by its practitioners to be morally justifiable) perverse system is nonexistent in Assam. When a girl leaves her father's family to start a new life, gifts are given by parents depending upon their financial status. Marriage is not arranged on the basis of dowry. The bride in a traditional or modern Assamese marriage is given and accepted for what she is in herself and not for her father's money. Neither do the boys have price tags attached to them according to their qualifications.

Recounting her experiences, Kakati wrote that she did not know about the dowry system until she met her Bengali roommate during her undergraduate studies in Gauhati in 1959. Kakati added that she was taken aback when her roommate proudly described that all the expenditures of the wedding which included traveling, boarding and lodging of the marriage party were incurred by the father of the bride. When Kakati came to Varanasi in UP for higher studies, she heard many ghastly stories about the dowry system.

Kakati expressed pride in her indigenous culture which she claimed was not yet polluted by the "decadent Indian culture; dowry system itself and dowry deaths are definite symptoms of a decadent culture."

Kakati observed that Assam has basically the same socioeconomic structure as the rest of the country. She expressed hope that if one region or one large community in India continues to be completely free from the evil system, it is possible "to, at least imagine or dream of, or at the most, strive for an eradication of the dowry system all over the country through some form of a social change."

## Fotedar elected to Rajya Sabha

Makhan Lal Fotedar, a long-time Kashmiri advisor to the Gandhi family and reportedly a very influential person in the circles close to Rajiv Gandhi, was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha on May 3.

## Alexander to be the High Commissioner in England

Dr. PC Alexander, former principal secretary to the Prime Minister, has been appointed India's High Commissioner to Britain.

Alexander resigned from his former post following the arrests of aides in his office because of their alleged involvement in the spy scandal that was exposed early this year. Secrets - industrial, military and commercial - were reportedly being sold by businessmen involved in export-import trade to eastern block countries and France. These secrets were allegedly being obtained through aides in the Prime Minister's office, ministries of defence, commerce and industries, as well as the President's office.

It was also reported in the press then that Alexander, Dhawan, and others were asked to resign because Rajiv Gandhi wanted to overhaul his advisory body.



## LETTERS AND COMMENTS

### 'NAXALITE' LABEL JUSTIFIES STATE REPRESSION.

Calcutta's STATESMAN, in an article dated 27 May reported that the Inspector-General of Police (CID), Mr. S.N. Roy declared in Patna that a "major breakthrough had been achieved in Bihar in curbing extremists and anti-socials." They included kidnapper-dacoits, hardened criminals and eleven Naxalites. Among the latter were "two key ideologists of the Indian People's Front", Baldeo Prasad and Krishnandan Paswan.

This is just one more in a series of attacks and arrests against a democratic organization. By labelling it Naxalite, which is not only incorrect but in this case a lie, the state apparatus builds a case for repression of an opposition organization. The Indian People's Front (IPF) participated in the recent Assembly elections in Bihar. One of their workers was also murdered in election violence. The state machinery would think twice about depriving a member of any other political party of her/his civil rights.

The IPF is one of the few organizations that has adopted non-traditional organizational methods and though very young, has a programme of action that has won it genuine mass support in urban and rural areas of parts of India, (especially Bihar). Consequently, it intimidates those in power who would have it smashed and it is of no avail if all norms of justice are flagrantly disregarded to achieve this end. This is a dangerous and insidious precedent. If democratic-minded Indians sit back and buy the state propaganda that the IPF is a 'Naxalite' organization and therefore must be exterminated, they are only strengthening the hands of state repression which may eventually be turned against them.

This is a common tactic. The Israelis label the Palestinians terrorists to justify their liquidationist policies towards them. Reagan calls the populist government of Nicaragua 'communist' to win support for his war to instal reactionaries instead.

Today they come for your neighbour, tomorrow they come for you. Now is the time to speak up.

Yours, etc.

Debjani Chatterjee Montreal

I must confess that I find most articles badly written, too long, no identification of the writer, and unfortunately to a great extent pretty boring. However, it is good to get this information. Your publication comes a long way from the Maoist position of years ago to slightly left of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Oh well, as long as you keep it up.

Good luck,

H. Leventhal, New York

I think that India now articles are stereotype. On many issues its analysis is influenced by the Western Press. For instance, in assessing the present Indian government of Rajiv Gandhi, India Now falls in the same trap as New York Times. Will Rajiv Gandhi lean towards the West or remain close to the Soviet Union? This is a stereotype question. India is neither pro Soviet

nor pro West and at the same time tries to remain as friendly as possible with both. Will India take a stand against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan? Why should India take a stand? Does it help India to take a stand on every issue under the earth as a matter of principle?

Sudarshan, Montreal.

The APDR-PUCL (West Bengal) team after investigating the murder of Jalaluddin Sheikh at Shaligram, Nadia district, reports that he was murdered allegedly by five armed dacoits on April 12, 1985. The deceased was a Krishak Samity activist enjoying mass support. A member of the Panchayat Samity, he organized mass resistance to the dacoits thereby managing to curb their activities. The murderers belong to the same village and his father Abul Qasim had given their names to the police. They are alleged to have links with the Congress(I) and no warrant has been issued against them. Two prior attempts had been made on Jalal's life and he had informed the police about it but no protective measures were taken. Instead, the police abetted the dacoits in terrorizing the people. The team concludes that it was a planned murder organized by the Congress(I)-police-dacoit nexus.

Dilip Banerjee (PUCL)  
Debasis Bhattacharya (APDR)

a letter in Frontier, May 11.

### I AM TWO IN ONE- A PARADIGM SHIFT IN

#### REALITIES

∴ S.S. Sodhi

I am an Indo-Canadian, a recent arrival,  
I add "colour" to the Canadian mosaic,  
That makes me two in one.  
I love India, but I am getting alienated by,  
The guilt-free massacres,  
The Government induced,  
Socially sanctioned violence,  
My ideological pacifist background,  
My idealized image of "Mother India",  
Torn to shreds by fundamentalistic uprising,  
My peaceful Indian mystic reality,  
Being shaped by "Doon School, computer Boys",  
Fragmented, I stand, two in one.

My national heroes—Bhagat, Subhash, Nehru and  
Mahatma Gandhi,  
Being replaced by dynastic rulers Indira, Sanjay and  
Rajiv.  
The peace inducing films of my youthful days,  
Have been replaced by seductive sadism, of Amitabh.  
My desire to teach my children,  
My realities, the struggle filled realities of my Indian  
childhood,  
But their aversions of the degenerated present day Indian  
Psyche!

Fragments and tears me in the middle  
And makes tears well up in my eyes  
Because I am two in one.

[Dr. Sodhi is professor of Education at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada]



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